

Press release: Way forward for courts and tribunals estate published

- Principles set out for future court changes
- Travel times and ease of transport to be prioritised
- New Court and Tribunal Design Guide published

The [Fit for the Future: Transforming the court and tribunal estate consultation response](#), published by HM Courts & Tribunals Service (HMCTS), details how decisions regarding the future of the estate should be made. It makes clear that people will continue to be able to access court and tribunals while providing value for money for the taxpayer and ensuring long-term efficiency.

This has been developed to complement HMCTS' £1bn Reform Programme, which is bringing new technology and modern ways of working to the justice system, making it more accessible for everyone.

[Today's response](#) will make sure the court and tribunal estate remains fit for the 21st century.

It states that:

- When visits to courts are necessary, travel times and ease of transport will continue to be prioritised – with added support for vulnerable users
- Court and tribunal buildings will be fit for purpose and can be maintained at a reasonable cost to the taxpayer
- Specialist front-of-house staff will be at courts to support the public and legal professionals, and will be trained in new technologies
- The estate is aligned with the Reform Programme

Justice Secretary, David Gauke, said:

Our Reform Programme allows people to start to settle disputes away from the courtroom, while offering opportunities to improve our courts and tribunals.

With new technology and modern ways of working, we expect the number of people accessing our courts remotely to increase. We are reviewing the current estate to ensure it is fit for purpose.

This report makes sure that access to justice, value for money and efficiency are maintained in the long term and these principles will mean our justice system remains fit for the 21st century.

HMCTS has committed to ensuring that views from the public, legal professionals and stakeholders are sought before any relocation of services,

using the criteria set out in the Fit for the Future principles.

Reform may increase the number of people accessing courts remotely through online services, potentially reducing the need for court and tribunal buildings. Fit for the Future commits to not acting on that assumption by proposing to close courts without sound evidence that the reforms are reducing the use of those buildings.

Today's report follows a public consultation launched in January 2018. All 249 responses were carefully considered and used to strengthen the principles.

Alongside Fit for the Future, HMCTS has also published a [new Court and Tribunal Design Guide](#). This has been developed after engaging with user groups, to make sure the guide improves the experience for court and tribunal users, while providing value for the taxpayer.

Notes to Editors

1. Access to justice is a core principle of the Reform Programme and courts will only close when there is evidence that the estates principle can be met and, where appropriate, that reform is reducing the use of those buildings and people have access to a nearby alternative.
2. As set out in the consultation, the government is committed to ensuring the vast majority of people will be able to travel to and from court using public transport between the hours of 7.30am and 7.30pm.
3. Our analysis shows that, to date, there has been limited change to the proportion of people who have reasonable journeys to court as a result of court closures. In fact, since December 2010, our data shows there is less than 2% difference in the proportion of people who could attend their nearest court by 9.30am.
4. The government's [Fit for the Future: transforming the court consultation response](#).
5. [The Court and Tribunal Design Guide](#).
6. As lessons are learned and HMCTS Reform initiatives develop, the Design Guide will be updated, and further iterations published.
7. For more information contact the MoJ press office on 0203 334 0173